IN GOD WE TRUST

# DIE LAUGHING

SCORCHED AND SHREDDED, MAYBE A BROKEN RIB, ENERGY SAPPED... NEVER FELT SO WEAK, SO FOUL...

...BUT I'M NOT DEAD YET...

...AND THE MEDIA VULTURES CAN FEED ON SOME **COLDER** CARCASS.

BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE,

DOUG MOENCH • WRITER
JIM APARO • PENCILLER
JOSEF RUBINSTEIN • INKER
ADRIENNE ROY • COLORIST
RICHARD STARKINGS • LETTERER
JORDAN B. GORFINKEL • ASSISTANT EDITOR
DENNIS O'NEIL • EDITOR

FEEL SO BAD, I WANT TO DIE...

...AND NOW...

...HE'S HERE, IN WAYNE MANOR...

BANE.

...READY AND WILLING TO GRANT MY WISH.

# THE BROKEN BAT

DOUG MOENCH WRITER

JIM APARO ARTIST

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RICHARD STARKINGS LETTERER

JORDAN B. GORFINKEL ASST. EDITOR

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BATMAN CREATED by BOB KANE.

YOU... YOU KNOW WHO I--

YOU COULD BE NO ONE ELSE.

THIS "BRUCE WAYNE" IS NOTHING BUT A MASK-- AND ONE WHICH NO LONGER SERVES ANY PURPOSE...

...ALTHOUGH MY MASK--

TEK

FSHSH

--STILL DOES.

A DIRECT FEED THROUGH THE HELMET -- STRAIGHT INTO MY BRAIN AND BLOODSTREAM -- BURNING MY VEINS WITH A VERY SPECIAL POTION...

THE VENOM DERIVATIVE.

VENOM, YES -- YOU *FOUND* SOME, NO DOUBT, PUMPED INTO THE *RIDDLER*.

AND YOU ARE... *FAMILIAR* WITH VENOM?

YES.

THEN YOU KNOW WHAT IT CAN *DO*?

ALL TOO WELL.

YOU *THINK* SO? I THINK NOT.

I WAS ONCE MADE A *GUINEA PIG* FOR AN EXPERIMENTAL *"IMPROVED CONCENTRATE"* OF VENOM.

TRUST ME, NO MATTER *WHAT* YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE, YOU KNOW *NOTHING* OF *MY* VENOM.

THE SHEER STRENGTH AND *FEROCITY* NOW COURSING THROUGH ME IS ENOUGH TO *BREAK* A MAN -- *ANY* MAN -- LIKE A *DEAD STICK*.

*HOW* DID YOU KNOW --

I'VE KNOWN YOU SINCE I LIVED IN THE HELL OF A DARK HOLE *THOUSANDS OF MILES* FROM HERE.

I'VE KNOWN YOU IN MY *DREAMS*.

AND I *ESCAPED* FROM THAT HELL -- ESCAPED FROM MY *DREAMS* -- FOR ONE REASON ONLY.

TO *FIND* YOU -- AND TO *BREAK* YOU.

*WHY?* WHAT HAS IT ALL BEEN *ABOUT?* FREEING THE INMATES FROM *ARKHAM*, WATCHING ME *DEAL* WITH THEM, WATCHING *THEM* WEAR ME *DOWN*... WAS IT ALL JUST TO *LEARN* ABOUT ME? TO *WEAKEN* ME?

THERE MUST BE *MORE* TO IT -- BUT *WHAT?*

*GOTHAM*-- THE *ULTIMATE PRIZE.*

YOU *HAVE* IT.

I *WANT* IT.

AND ALL THE *DEATHS*... ALL THE *WASTED LIVES*... IT'S BEEN NOTHING BUT *THAT?*

YOU'D *KILL* JUST TO "*RULE*" THIS *CITY?* JUST FOR--

I'D KILL FOR *ANY-THING.*

I'D KILL TO SILENCE A *GRATING VOICE.*

TO DARKEN THE LIGHT IN EYES THAT DARED *LOOK* AT ME.

THEN WHILE YOU *REVEL* IN IT, BANE, I'M *SICK* OF DEATH -- SICK OF *BLOOD* -- SICK OF THE CHAOS AND HORROR YOU'VE BROUGHT TO GOTHAM --

--AND RIGHT INTO MY *HOME.*

I'VE SPENT MY *LIFE* FIGHTING YOUR KIND OF MADNESS AND *EVIL* --

--AND NOW THAT LIFELONG FIGHT HAS BROUGHT ME TO DEATH'S DOOR, MY *OWN* DOOR...

I WOULD NOT *BE* HERE WERE IT *OTHER-WISE.*

I *REALIZE* THAT -- AND I *REALIZE* YOU MAY WELL BE THE *SINGLE GREATEST SOURCE* OF MADNESS AND EVIL I'VE *EVER* FACED...

*EASILY.*

AND IN *THAT* CASE...

...*ONE MORE TIME.*

*BUT THIS TIME IS DIFFERENT.*

THIS TIME IS --

THUNCH

--DOOMED.

PUSHING TOO **HARD** FOR TOO **LONG**...

KRESH

UHN

...FACING THE MADNESS OF TOO MANY **MASKS**...

...BEARING THE BRUNT OF TOO MUCH **VIOLENCE**...

S-SIR? ARE... ARE YOU--

G-GO, ALFRED...

GET **OUT** OF HERE BEFORE--

AGH-K!

SIR--!

...TOO MUCH **PAIN**...

ALREADY BURNED DOWN AND OUT FROM ENDS AND EVERY ANGLE...

SMASH

... BATTERED, BASHED AND SCARRED FROM A THOUSAND CUTS AND BLOWS...

... TOTTERING ON BRITTLE BONES AND LURCHING THROUGH VERTIGO FOR **MONTHS** NOW...

SIR--!

WUMP

... EARS BUZZING AND RINGING... EVERY-THING TOO **BRIGHT** AND GLITTERY...

... EVEN IN THE **DARK**...

TOO MUCH PUNISHMENT... OVERWHELMING ODDS...

PASSING BLOOD FOR WEEKS...

CHUMP

... RACING FOR DEATH MY WHOLE LIFE...

G-GOT TO ... GET HELP...

EVERY MUSCLE SLUGGISH... SLUGGISH AND TREMBLING...

... ALL STRENGTH STRETCHED AND SAPPED, WASHED IN WEAKNESS...

KRUNCH

... MIRED IN A SLOW-MOTION PANIC OF HELPLESSNESS...

... AND THROUGH IT ALL, NO SLEEP, NO **REST**...

... EVEN WHEN MOVEMENT ITSELF WAS **IMPOSSIBLE**...

... NOTHING BUT THE MIND'S DESPERATE URGE TO GET OFF THE FLOOR AND **STRIKE BACK.**

CHFT

... EVEN WHEN EVERY UPHILL EFFORT IS WASTED AND **FUTILE**...

YOU ARE ALREADY BROKEN.

... REALITY ITSELF SMASHED AND SPLINTERED, LIKE THE RUDE DEATH OF AN IMPOSSIBLE **DREAM**...

... AWAKENING AGAIN AND AGAIN TO NOTHING BUT **AGONY**, RELENTLESS AND **REPEATED**...

SHOKK

AND THEN THE CROWNING HORROR OF **SHATTERED ARKHAM**...

... SPILLING ITS MAD GUTS INTO THE LONG DARK NIGHT OF **HOPELESS HORROR.**

T-TIM..!

A LEGION OF CRAZED KILLERS LOOSED ON GOTHAM... TOO MANY AND TOO MUCH TO FIGHT...

IT IS OVER.

YOU ARE NOTHING.

...THE TOLL TOO GREAT, PRIDE NO LONGER AN ASSET... ONLY PRELUDE TO A FALL!!!

...LEAVING ME DRAINED AND DEPLETED...

KKUMP

A DISAPPOINT-MENT!

...UTTERLY EMPTY.

BUT STILL THEY LOOMED AND LUNGED FROM THE DARK...

...LAUGHING DEMONS WITH BAD INTENT...

...BEARING PAIN AND NOTHING MORE...

SHUNP

...CHIPPING AWAY AT WHATEVER WAS LEFT...

WUMP

...WEARING ME DOWN TOWARD NOTHING...

BRRING BRRING

STILL NOT HOME...

...EVEN AT NIGHT.

DR. SHONDRA KINS

...AND NOWHERE.

HWOK

VERTIGO... WHIRLING OUT OF CONTROL NOW... TIME DISTORTED... IMAGES FLASHING...

...THEN AND NOW A CONFUSED BLUR...

ONE CENT
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WHY DON'T YOU FIGHT?!

BAMP

...EVERY SHOCK AND CONCUSSION THE SAME...

...EACH DEVASTATING...

...AND ALL ADDING UP...

PRAK

...TO ONE LONG PLUNGE INTO HELL...

...NIGHTMARISH...

YOU'VE GOT NO SPINE!

...NEVER-ENDING...

WUBASHT

...GARISH AND BIZARRE...

SWAP

THUMP

...INSANITY TOO STARK TO SUFFER OR SURMOUNT.

ALL OF THEM... THEY ALL HAD A HAND IN IT...

... BUT IT WAS **BANE'S** BLOODY HAND BEHIND **THEM**, BEHIND IT ALL.

CHOOOF

**BANE** FROM THE **BEGINNING** -- AND BANE **NOW**, AT THE **END**.

KESSH

NO... **CAN'T** GIVE IN, NOT **NOW**, NO MATTER **HOW HURT**... CAN'T LET HIM **WIN**...

CAN'T SURRENDER TO THE BLESSED RELIEF... OF **ENDING IT ALL.**

JASON... ROBIN...

TIM --!

HELP, TIM--!

BAMP BAMP BAMP

TIMOTHY, THANK GOD! WE'VE GOT TO --

ALFRED! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HEA --

NEVER MIND THAT, TIM!

THE MASTER NEEDS **HELP**, AND IT'S **BAD!** WE MUST GET **JEAN PAUL** AND --

**WHAT?**

KEEP YOUR **VOICE** DOWN, ALFRED, BEFORE YOU **WAKE DAD.**

HOW BAD?

I ... I DON'T **KNOW**, LAD, BUT WE... WE MAY NEED...

... AN **AMBULANCE.**

I...

I'LL GET MY COSTUME.

HARSH TANG OF BRIMSTONE EXPANDING IN MY CHEST... EVERY BREATH **HOT** AND **BITTER**... BUT I **CAN'T** GIVE IN...

GOT TO **TRY**... EVEN WITH NO MORE SPRING IN MY STEP, NO BITE OF BOOT INTO GROUND...

... NO MORE **POWER**...

YOU HAVE **NOTHING!**

... NO MORE **SPEED**...

**THUP**

**TUD**

**CHUOK**

... NO MORE **REFLEXES.**

SKUTCH

AHRRR!

THAT'S... IT...

...GAVE MY ALL... LONG AGO...

...AND WHAT'S LEFT...

Ahn--!

...ISN'T ENOUGH...

...NOT WHEN I'VE ALREADY TAKEN MORE DAMAGE THAN ANY MAN CAN ENDURE...

...ALL IN A LOSING CAUSE.

...AND NOW... FEEL SO BAD... I WANT TO DIE...

BEG FOR MERCY!

SCREAM MY NAME!

G-GO... BACK TO...

...HELL.

AND I'M... DONE.

SWOK

I AM **BANE** -- AND I COULD **KILL** YOU...

... BUT DEATH WOULD ONLY **END YOUR AGONY** -- AND **SILENCE YOUR SHAME.**

**INSTEAD,** I WILL SIMPLY...

...BREAK YOU!

KRAKT

BROKEN...

...AND DONE.

DUFT

THE DRUG WORKED--!

BUT HE... HE BEAT ME...

DON'T WORRY, SIR-- JEAN PAUL AND SAL FIORINI WILL BE ENHANCING THE MANOR SECURITY SYSTEM THIS AFTERNOON...

BANE SHAN'T BE GETTING IN HERE AGAIN.

DOESN'T NEED TO... ALREADY BEAT ME... IT'S OVER...

GOTHAM... IS HIS...

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND.

NOR IS THE BATMAN.

END.

HE DREAMS...

HE IS LOST...

..WEAK...

PANT...

PANT...

...AND ALONE.

HIH...

HHH...

CAN'T FIND...
MY WAY...

GHK...

NGH...

CAN'T...

NOW... YOU HAVE TWO CHOICES.

YOU WERE NEVER MEANT TO CARRY THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD.

YOU WERE NEVER MEANT TO FIX WHAT YOU CANNOT CONTROL.

YOU WERE NEVER MEANT TO DO THIS ALONE.

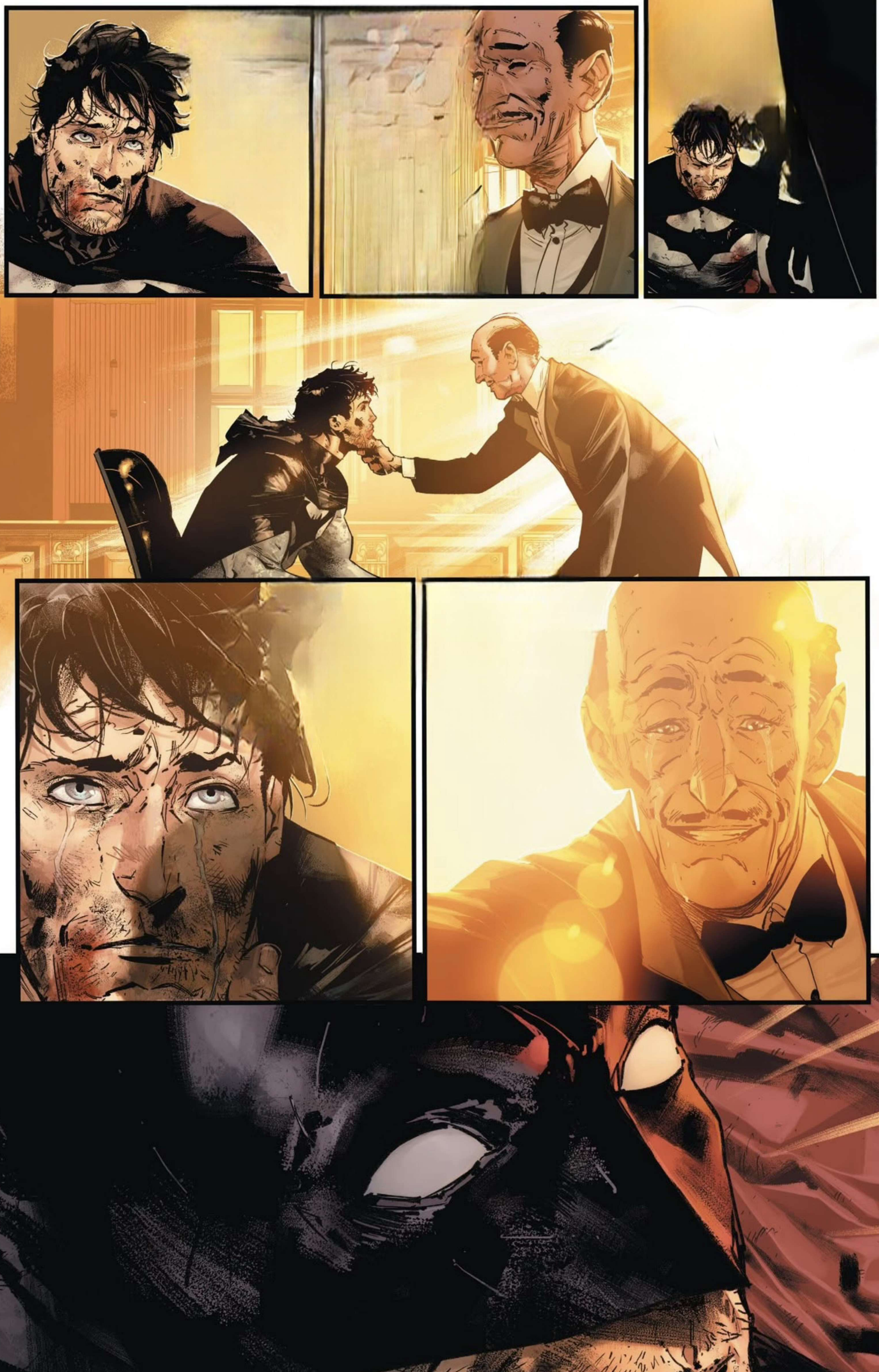
ALL THIS TIME...

YOU HAVE BEEN HOLDING ON.

HOLDING ON TO PAIN.

HOLDING ON TO CONTROL.

SURRENDER UNTO ME..AND BE FREE.



...WHY?!
OR BECOME THE WORST VILLAIN, THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN
BECAUSE I'M THE
#$%^&*$
BATMAN WHO LAUGHS!
HAHAHA!
SO FOLLOW ME DOWN...

...AND WHAT SHOULD NEVER BE.